

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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R 041632Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3193

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 0169

LIMDIS

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EO 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PBOR, NS, FR, FG

SUBJECT: SETTLEMENT OF SURINAM-FRENCH GUIANA BORDER DISPUTE

SUMMARY: SURINAM AND FRANCE HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT ON THE SETTLEMENT OF THEIR BORDER DISPUTE, WHICH GIVES THE DISPUTED TERRITORY ENTIRELY TO FRANCE, WITH FRANCE UNDERTAKING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SURINAM. BY THIS SETTLEMENT SURINAM HOPES TO STRENGTHEN ITS HAND VIS-A-VIS GUYANA, SINCE THE AGREEMENT IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIVER WITH THE GREATEST WATER FLOW, A PRINCIPLE THAT WOULD RESULT IN SURINAM'S ACQUISITION OF THE TERRITORY UNDER DISPUTE WITH GUYANA.

1. THE FRENCH CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN SURINAM HAS RETURNED FROM A NEGOTIATING SESSION IN PARIS AT WHICH AGREEMENT WAS REACHED BETWEEN THE SURINAM AND FRENCH DELEGATIONS ON THE SETTLEMENT OF THE LONG-STANDING BORDER DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE CHARGE HAS GIVEN THE AMBASSADOR A COPY OF THE AGREED TEXT, WITH THE INJUNCTION THAT NO ONE BE ALLOWED TO KNOW THAT HE HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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DONE SO. KNOWLEDGE OF THIS AGREEMENT MUST THEREFORE NOT BE DIVULGED AT THIS TIME TO ANY FOREIGN GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING FRANCE OR SUIRNAM.

2. THE BORDER AT PRESENT FOLLOWS THE LINE OF THE MAROWIGNE-LAWA-MAROWINI RIVERS SOUTH FROM THE SEA TO THE SOURCE OF THE MAROWINI, AND THENCE A SHORT DISTANCE TO THE COMMON BORDER

WITH BRAZIL, WITH THE DISPUTED TERRITORY IN SURINAM'S POSSESSION.
THE NEW BORDER OF THE LAWA AND THE LITANI (YES, ANOTHER LITANI*)
RIVERS TO THE JUNCTION OF THE LITANI AND KOELEKOELE CREEK,
THENCE TO THE SOURCE OF THE KOELEKOELE AND THENCE THE SHORT
DISTANCE TO THE BRAZILIAN BORDER, THUS TRANSFERRING TO FRANCE
THE DISPUTED TERRITORY OF APPROXIMATELY 5,000 SQUARE KILOMETERS.

3. THE AGREEMENT FURTHER PROVIDES FOR:

A. ECONOMIC COOPERATION ALONG THE BORDER AREA BETWEEN SURINAM
AND FRENCH GUIANA ON LAND AND SEA, INCLUDING THE CONTINENTAL
SHELF;

B. A SPECIAL ECONOMIC REGIME IN THE FORMERLY DISPUTED TERRITORY,
WITH PARTICIPATION BY BOTH SURINAM AND FRANCE UNDER DIRECTION
OF A MIXED PERMANENT COMMISSION, FOR AN INITIAL PERIOD OF 70
YEARS, RENEWABLE THEREAFTER FOR 30-YEAR PERIODS;

C. A TREATY OF COOPERATION TO BE NEGOTIATED AND SIGNED AT THE
SAME TIME AS THE BORDER AGREEMENT, PROVIDING FOR FRENCH ASSIST-
ANCE IN SURINAM'S DEVELOPMENT.

4. THE DEMARCATION OF THE BORDER IS STATED TO FOLLOW THE PRINC-
IPLE THAT WHEN A RIVER FORMS A BORDER AND SPLITS INTO SEVERAL
BRANCHES, THE BRANCH HAVING THE MAXIMUM FLOW OF WATER IS CON-
SIDERED TO BE THE MAIN BRANCH AND THEREFORE THE BORDER.
SURINAMERS HAVE LONG MAINTAINED, IN DISCUSSING THIS MATTER
WITH THE EMBASSY, THAT THEY INTENDED TO HAVE THEIR BORDER
SETTLEMENT WITH FRANCE STRENGTHEN THEIR HAND IN DEALING WITH
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GUYANA ON THE MUCH LARGER DISPUTED TERRITORY ON SURINAM'S
WEST BORDER, TERRITORY WHICH IS NOW UNDER GUYANESE CONTROL.
WE HAVE THEREFORE ASSUMED THAT SURINAM EXPECTED TO GET ALL
OR AT LEAST A PART OF THE DISPUTED AREA IN THE EAST, IN ORDER
TO ASK THE SAME OF GUYANA IN THE WEST. ACCORDING TO THE EXPLAN-
ATION OF THE FRENCH CHARGE, HOWEVER, THE LEVERAGE WHICH SURINAM
EXPECTS TO ACQUIRE AGAINST GUYANA IS ITS YIELDING TERRITORY
TO FRANCE UNDER THE PRINCIPLE OF THE GREATEST FLOW OF WATER,
WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT GUYANA WILL THEN ALSO BE INFLUENCED
TO GO ALONG WITH THIS PRINCIPLE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. IN THIS
CASE, THE GUYANA-SURINAM BORDER WOULD BE MOVED WEST FROM THE
PRESENT COEROENI RIVER TO WHAT THE SURINAMERS CALL THE UPPER
CORANTIJN (AND GUYANA CALLS NEW RIVER), WITH THE LATTER
BEING CONSIDERED THE UPPER BRANCH OF THE CORANTIJN RIVER ON
THE BASIS OF WATER FLOW GREATER THAN THE COEROENI.

5. ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH CHARGE, MINISTER PRESIDENT ARRON
IS ANXIOUS TO HAVE THE NEW TREATY OF COOPERATION NEGOTIATED
RAPIDLY IN ORDER TO PERMIT HIM TO GO TO PARIS FOR THE SIGNING

BEFORE THE END OF APRIL, AND THUS ENSURE PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL BEFORE PARLIAMENT IS DISSOLVED (PROBABLY IN MAY) IN PREPARATION FOR THE COMING ELECTIONS. SINCE THE GOVERNMENT HAS KEPT PARLIAMENT INFORMED ON THE PROGRESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH FRANCE AND HAS OBTAINED INFORMAL CONCURRENCE IN ITS POSITIONS, THERE SHOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY IN GETTING FINAL APPROVAL RAPIDLY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 0169

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6. A COPY IN FRENCH OF THE BORDER AGREEMENT IS BEING POUCHED TO ARA/CAR.

7. COMMENT: THIS EMBASSY IS SOMEWHAT SURPRISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF SURINAM CONSIDERS THIS AGREEMENT ONE THAT WILL STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION AGAINST GUYANA. THE IDEA THAT GUYANA WILL BE SWAYED BY THE LEGAL ARGUMENT SEEMS TO US TO PLACE TOO MUCH FAITH IN LEGALITIES, WHILE THE PROBLEM IS A POLITICAL ONE AND ONE THAT ENGAGES THE NATIONAL PRIDE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. ONE WOULD THINK THAT THE REACTION OF GUYANA WILL BE EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE: SURINAM SURRENDERED TO FRANCE TERRITORY WHICH IT HAD CLAIMED AND WHICH IT HAD POSSESSION OF; IF SURINAM WILL DO THAT, THEN CERTAINLY IT WILL EVENTUALLY GIVE UP ON A CLAIM AGAINST GUYANA FOR TERRITORY WHICH GUYANA NOW OCCUPIES. THE ONLY PART OF THE NEW AGREEMENT WHICH MIGHT APPEAR TO WORK OTHERWISE IS THE WILLINGNESS OF FRANCE TO PUT THE DISPUTED AREA UNDER A KIND OF SPECIAL ECONOMIC REGIME, WITH SOME BENEFITS

FOR SURINAM, AND UNDER A JOINT COMMITTEE WHICH WILL HAVE INFLU-
ENCE ON ECONOMIC MATTERS IN THE AREA IF NOT POLITICAL. IF
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IN FACT SURINAM WOULD SETTLE FOR THAT KIND OF SOLUTION WITH
GUYANA, AND IF GUYANA WOULD FIND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COOP-
ERATIVE ECONOMIC REGIME A REASONABLE PRICE TO PAY FOR THE
RECOGNITION OF ITS BORDER WITH SURINAM, THEN THERE MIGHT BE
A POSSIBILITY FOR SUCH AN AGREEMENT.
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